

Message Text

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63

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3471

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 02533

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR BE LU NE

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: RUMORED FUSION OF KLM, SABENA AND LUXAIR

REF: LUXEMBOURG 194

BELGIAN PRESS HAS GIVEN PROMINENT PLAY TO STORY OF TALKS AMONG COMMUNICATIONS MINISTERS ABOUT CIVIL AVIATION MATTERS IN AN EFFORT TO CONTROL SPECULATION, BELGIAN COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER CHABERT IS QUOTED BY LE SOIR AS SAYING, "INFORMAL AND EXPLORATORY CONVERSATIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE, IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE CONCERNED COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF CIVIL AVIATION.. CONTRARY TO RUMORS THAT HAVE CIRCULATED, THERE HAS BEEN NO NEGOTIATION AMONG THE NETHERLANDS, LUXEMBOURG, AND BELGIUM CONCERNING THE CREATION OF AN AVIATION COMPANY FOR THE ENTIRE BENELUX." CHABERT'S DUTCH COUNTERPART, WESTERTEP, IS SAID TO HAVE CONFIRMED THAT NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT TAKEN PLACE. ACCORDING TO LE SOIR, SABENA REPRESENTATIVES SAY THAT MORE SIGNIFICANCE HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE MEETING OF THE THREE MINISTERS THAN IS JUSTIFIED BY THE FACTS. ARTICLES GENERALLY DESCRIBE THE TROUBLES OF KLM AND SABENA AS HAVING TWO CHIEF ELEMENTS: (A) PRESENT OPERATIONS ARE LOSING MONEY, WITH NO IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF

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IMPROVEMENT; AND (B) THE AIRLINES FACE PRESSURE FROM THE

USG TO REDUCE CAPACITY ON THE LUCRATIVE NORTH ATLANTIC
ROUTES IT SHOULD BE NOTED ALSO THAT ALTHOUGH CHABERT AND OTHERS
HAVE BEEN QUICK TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TALKS
ON THIS SUBJECT, MEDIA COMMENT HAS NOT BEEN AT ALL HOSTILE
TO THE IDEA OF A SINGLE PAN-BENELUX AIRLINE.
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